



SOCIAL STUDIES

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Ellen burst into the nearest stall, braced one hand against the toilet seat, and jammed the fingers of the other down her throat.

Her stomach fought, protested, threatened. To keep it all down. To turn it all into fat. Fat on her belly, fat on her thighs, fat on her face. She shoved harder, forcing her fingers further. Fuck, she'd jam her entire fist down her throat if that's what it took.

She gagged. Her mouth filled. A hot slurry of Hostess ejected into the toilet.

Ellen retched until the only thing left was long, black drools sliding off her chin. She flopped to the floor, drained and curling her upper lip at the puke-splattered crime scene. She ran a forearm across her face, smearing the mess off the best she could.

Hallway chatter briefly filled the bathroom followed by the sound of a door swooshing shut. Ellen leaned forward to flush the toilet. The lock behind her jiggled, and then the stall burst open.

"Uh-oh, did piggy eat too many Twinkies?" A cat-eyed girl, heavy-lidded under a pound of mascara, pointed her bejeweled iPhone at Ellen. Her lips twisted into a grin.

"Fuck off, Vera." Ellen scrambled to swipe the phone from her grip but whiffed, smacking the partition instead.

Vera backed up laughing, phone still aimed at Ellen.

A faucet kicked on outside the stall and Ellen's breath caught in her throat as she looked past Vera. Carly Allen leaned into the mirror, her reflection smoothing out a thick layer of ruby-red Dior Addict

across her lips. Straight black hair framed her porcelain skin and accented her emerald eyes. She smacked her lips together and sighed.

“Ellen, it smells like Little Debbie took a shit in here.”

Vera snickered as Ellen shrank back against the toilet.

“Come on,” Ellen pleaded. “We all do this.”

Carly dropped the lip gloss into her Jacquemus micro and snapped it shut before turning to face Ellen. Vera stepped back and shifted the phone to Carly.

“The fucking exorcism you just performed into that poor toilet isn’t something I’ve ever done.” Her eyes cut to Vera. “How about you?”

Vera mouthed a pouty, exaggerated, “Nope.”

Carly continued, “Purging is for little piggies who can’t control themselves.” Her eyes glazed past Ellen to the toilet, and she mouthed out a gag. “To be honest, I’m not sure I’ll ever eat again after smelling that.”

“I’m sorry.” Ellen dug her nails into her fleshy arms. “I’m just so hungry all the time.”

Carly’s eyes rolled.

“That’s fine. So tomorrow you sit with the fatties around the trough instead of with us.”

Ellen stared at the floor. “I’ll stop. I swear.”

Carly cocked her head. “Can you stop? Can your giant piggy body control your giant piggy appetite?”

Vera oinked and then covered her mouth, giggling before swinging the phone back to Ellen to catch her response.

Ellen breathed deep, pulling the tears back from her eyes. “Yes.”

“What do you think, Vera?” Carly asked. “Can she control it?”

Vera shook her head. “I don’t think piggies like her can.” She oinked again, louder this time.

“I’m not a pig,” Ellen protested. “Can we please just forget this? I swear I won’t do it again.”

Carly frowned. “I think Ellen needs to admit she’s a big ol’ piggy.” She positioned herself in front of the exit. Vera shifted behind her, raising the phone so it peeked over Carly’s shoulder. “Right now.”

Vera stepped forward. “A big ol’ piggy loser.”

Ellen’s cheeks burned. A lonely sickness stirred in the pit of her stomach. She eyed Vera’s phone. “Can you at least stop recording?”

“No, you need a reminder.” Carly leaned in, pointing her polished finger at Ellen. “Now say you’re a big ol’ piggy.”

Ellen held Carly’s eyes, her jaw clinched shut.

Carly straightened and shrugged. “One less fatty following me around.” She took a step back.

“Wait!” Ellen gasped, coming up to her knees.

Carly turned back and folded her arms.

The phone hovered. Voices floated in from the hallway.

Ellen’s eyes dropped to the floor. “I’m a piggy.”

Carly shook her head. “That’s not what I said.”

“I’m a big ol’ piggy,” Ellen mumbled.

“I can’t hear you.” Carly leaned in. “And this time, oink.”

Ellen lifted her head. A tear broke free and trailed down her cheek. “I’m a big ol’ piggy. Oink, oink, oink.”

“Louder!” Carly slammed her palm into the stall, her eyes casting to a shade of black. “I want to hear you, piggy!”

“Oink like a real pig!” Vera blurted between laughs.

Ellen clamped her eyes, bit back a sob, and screamed, “I’m a big ol’ piggy!” Her oinks, more sobs than pig snorts, echoed off the bathroom walls. Her chest ached. Her head throbbed.

Vera cackled. Carly nodded, a satisfied grin sliding across her face.

The bell rang.

In the hall, lockers slammed, and the door swung open, a stream of girls piling in. Vera tapped the screen with her thumb and slid the phone into the back pocket of her Agoldes.

Carly, her eyes green again, reached down and unrolled three sheets of single-ply toilet paper. She folded them, leaned over, and gently dabbed Ellen’s face clean.